

Copy for Dan

March 22, 1966

Dear Fred:

We are just completing a hectic but fascinating week in Vietnam during which thanks especially to Dan we have gotten around quite a bit, managing in fact to include a faintly James Bond expedition in a car along a road partially belonging to the Viet Cong in the province of Kien Hoa. Lush tropical vegetation lovely to see and providing excellent cover for ambush. We had a lovely Vietnamese girl as interpreter who carried gracefully and without ostentation a hand grenade when it wasn't in the left side pocket of the rear seat. And when Roberta got in on the wrong side once she delicately retrieved the grenade for the right hand pocket. Quite aside from such frills and chills we've learned a great deal and it's quite true that some of what we've learned in its concreteness seems possible to acquire only by questioning people on the spot in the provinces. Dan has been traveling on frequent trips into the countryside since he arrived.

Our trip to Kien Hoa may not strike you immediately as part of your own world-wide recruitment drive for Alain's shop. But it was. John Paul Vann, a retired Army Lt. Colonel now working for AID as their Cadre Project Manager and a famous figure here in South Vietnam, was the one who drove us out. And we had been sizing him up for you from our first day here. He is without question an extraordinary man and quite worthy of Dan's enthusiastic descriptions. He was also the principal hero of Halberstam's Making of a Quagmire which recounted some of his role as the advisor for the GVN 7th Infantry Division which at the time ~~xxx~~ had control or nominal control of 8 provinces and over three million people from the Delta. Halberstam's admiration of course is less significant than Dan's. I've asked Dan to write you separately.

In brief Dan thinks that Vann is far and away the best man for Systems Analysis in OSD to make an entry into the jungle of misinformation on revolutionary war, in particular in South Vietnam. As you will see from the vita I enclose he has training in statistics and financial management. He is extremely direct and articulate and most important, he is hard to fool with the largely irrelevant statistics the government seems to be relying on now for determining policy and estimating progress\*, in the crucial war on which the conventional war we are waging is superimposed. And he is full of ideas based on a very intimate acquaintance with the countryside about the effects on the security and commitments of the population of various military alternatives. He has great energy and drive, knows of Alain's work and is interested in the possibility of working in your shop. He is on leave from the Denver division of Martin-Marietta (where by the way he had an operational research position in military planning).

*operational research position in military planning*

\* body counts, no. of incidents, kill ratios, "structures" destroyed



He was well paid there and his FSR 3 job with AID when combined with 25% hardship allowances, TDY etc. comes to about 32,000 dollars I believe, which is obviously beyond your reach. However, I think he would take a GS 17 if you have one. I would suggest that you or Alain request that he come to Washington very soon to consult. He says he can leave on a Monday and get back on Friday with a day and a half in Washington, feeling evidently - contrary to all the evidence that Roberta and I have accumulated - that sleep is not an essential. You should be able to move the mighty administrative machinery to pay for his trip.

I suggest you do it soon since I think he'll be making up his mind by June or July as to whether he'll stay here, or go back to Marietta or do something else. I would recommend him basically because I think he is intelligent, experienced in an area I think you and Alain should get into, and extremely hard working. I would stress that I think you and Alain should get into the area of revolutionary wars in Asia. For all the noise about it, it is an area that in my opinion is almost totally unoccupied by analysis worthy of the name or thoughtful long-range policy. And I'd love to see it "swept, cleared, secured and held" as they say out here. I honestly don't think this likely to happen unless you and Alain take the leadership in the government.

In the course of a great many discussions it has become clear to me that, as in the familiar point destruction probability formula, results ~~xxxx~~ appear to be unrelated to the absolute size either of the median errors or lethal radii. Only the ratio seems to count and an awful lot of rounds of artillery and what is euphemistically called aircraft payload are used to compensate for errors, and especially errors in intelligence. The trouble is that that 4 billion dollars we're about to expend in ammo will kill a great many non-combatants.\* And on some slightly higher level criteria keeping them alive as well as uncoerced would figure. There is an incredible amount of confirmable self-deception here, and RAND and Goure have helped the self-deception (It seems that women and children burned and maimed by our bombs are mad only at the VC.)

There are some fascinating new problems for analysis which are critical in a sensible policy, including in particular the costs and effects of increasing precision in intelligence by really exploiting the thousands of tons of captured documents and by systematic interrogation and correlation of information so obtained. The British who are here as advisors have been saying this at least since 1962 when I talked to them last.

*Aug 20, no to speak; undesired ground zero.*



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The British stress the importance of strategic intelligence of the police Special Branch sort ( identifying in detail individual cadres and their place in party plans and whereabouts ) as well as the tactical intelligence that is the usual limit of military interest. Dan has a strong interest in this and many related questions.

As we increase ground forces we might escalate all over the place. Or we might increase discrimination rather than simply to multiply fire-power. We could benefit by increased numbers of ground contacts with the VC, probes which draw fire, if we use them to make more rigorous the rules of engagement. I find that a very very small percentage of the missions are flown in close support. And the results of most of the other missions are in many cases only very doubtfully positive.

We take off tomorrow for Hong Kong and then Japan and nuclear proliferation. While I'm working on a unified field theory it will still be something of a wrench to start thinking of other - nuclear - values for the parameters.

Warmest regards to Ellen, Alain, Rosemary,